United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

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County of San Bernardino

Draft Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Granite Mountain Wind Energy Project DES 10-11

For the

Barstow Field Office

Barstow, California Roxie C. Trost, Field Manager

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROJECT SETTING

The proposed Granite Mountain Wind Energy Project (Proposed Project) would be sited on U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered public land and private land approximately 14 miles east of Victorville in San Bernardino County, California. The Proposed Project would be located in the Granite Mountains, within approximately 2,086 acres of public lands administered by the BLM Barstow Field Office and 670 acres of privately owned land under county land use jurisdiction.

The Proposed Project site consists of vacant desert lands. There are no established communities or residences within any portion of the Project site.

The BLM's purpose and need for the Granite Mountain Wind Energy Project is to respond to Granite Wind LLC's application under Title V of the FLPMA (43 USC 1761) for authorization of a right-of-way (ROW) on BLM-managed lands to construct, operate, and decommission a wind energy facility and associated infrastructure in compliance with the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA), BLM ROW regulations, and other applicable federal laws. The BLM would decide whether to approve, approve with modification, or deny issuance of a ROW authorization to Granite Wind LLC for the proposed Granite Mountain Wind Energy Project. Pursuant to BLM's California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan (1980, as amended), sites associated with power generation or transmission not identified in the CDCA Plan will be considered through the plan amendment process. The BLM will also decide whether the Project site is suitable or unsuitable for wind energy generation. The planning decision to be made provides the framework for the alternatives considered.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Proposed Action (Alternative 1)

Under Alternative 1, the CDCA Plan would be amended to determine the Project area to be environmentally suitable for development of wind energy facilities and associated infrastructure. Under this Alternative, a BLM ROW for the Proposed Project would be approved. The Proposed Project also requires the issuance of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and a Major Variance for height from San Bernardino County (County), for which the applicant applied in October 2007. The County is currently reviewing these applications.

The Proposed Project would include the installation of up to 28 2.3-megawatt (MW) Siemens wind turbines (or a similar model of wind turbine between 2.1 MW and 3 MW in capacity) on a permanent Project footprint of approximately between 91.2 to 109.3 acres and a total ROW of 2,756 acres. At full capacity, the Proposed Project is anticipated to produce approximately 185,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) of electricity per year.

The proposed wind turbine towers would be 80 meters (262 feet) tall (hub height) above existing grade. The turbine blades would extend an additional 50.5 meters (166 feet) above the hub, for a total tip height of 130.5 meters (428 feet) above existing grade.

Twenty of the wind turbines are proposed to be located on federal lands administered by the BLM, and eight wind turbines are proposed on immediately adjacent, private land. The Proposed Project would also require the construction of a new access road, Project substation, overhead transmission line, interconnection to the Southern California Edison 220-kilovolt transmission system, and an operations and maintenance building. Temporary facilities associated with construction of the Project include a construction office, on-site

concrete batch and gravel crushing plants, and materials staging and assembly areas. Each wind turbine would have a pad-mounted transformer located beside the wind turbine tower. A maintenance road and an underground electrical and communication line will connect each wind turbine tower. Two permanent meteorological towers would be installed to measure wind speed and direction across the site.

The wind turbines and associated facilities would be placed in locations that minimize environmental impacts, yet maximize energy production. The Proposed Project would comply with the requirements of the BLM ROW authorization, including any required monitoring during construction, operation, and maintenance and decommissioning.

The Proposed Project is expected to have an operating lifetime of 25 to 30 years, after which it may no longer be cost effective to continue operation. At or near that time, the applicant would determine if the operational life of the Project could be extended, the Project should be re-powered with new wind turbines, or the Project should be decommissioned. Should the Project's operational life be extended or the Project is re-powered, the applicant would work with the BLM and County to ensure the appropriate environmental reviews were conducted and applicable permits extended or obtained at that time. The goal of Project decommissioning is to remove the installed power generation equipment and return the site to a condition as close to a pre-construction state as feasible.

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4

Three other alternatives are being considered, along with the Proposed Action, in this Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/EIR).

- Alternative 2 is the No Action Site Suitable alternative. BLM would not authorize
 the ROW, but would amend the CDCA Plan to determine the site suitable for wind
 energy development, and the County would not grant a conditional use permit for the
 Project development on private lands. The Proposed Project would not be
 implemented.
- Alternative 3 proposes to amend the CDCA Plan to Determine the Site Unsuitable. BLM would amend the CDCA Plan to specify that the site of this Proposed Project is unsuitable for wind energy development and the County would not grant a conditional use permit for Project development on private lands. The Granite Mountain Wind Energy Project would not be implemented.
- Alternative 4 is the No Action alternative. BLM would not amend the CDCA Plan and would not authorize the ROW, and County would not grant a conditional use permit for Project development on private lands. The Proposed Project would not be implemented.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Table ES-1 summarizes impacts related to the Proposed Project. The selection of Alternative 1 would result in amendment of the CDCA Plan to determine the suitability of the site for the development of a wind energy project. However, the actual environmental consequences anticipated would result from the development of the Proposed Project; therefore, the table summarizes environmental impacts resulting from the Project pursuant to the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15123(b)(1).

Table ES-1: Comparison of Impacts and CEQA Level of Significance after Mitigation Matrix

	IMPACTS SUMMARY AND CEQA LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION			
TOPICS / IMPACTS	ALTERNATIVE 1: AMENDMENT TO CDCA PLAN DETERMINES SITE SUITABLE FOR WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT: APPROVAL OF PROPOSED PROJECT	ALTERNATIVE 2: ACTION ON AMENDMENT TO CDCA PLAN DETERMINES SITE SUITABLE FOR WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT	ALTERNATIVES 3 & 4: NO ACTION ON EITHER SITE SUITABILITY DETERMINATION OR PROPOSED PROJECT	
Air Quality				
Construction of the wind energy generation facility may exceed air quality standards.	Project emission totals would exceed the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD) thresholds of significance for particulate matter (PM) ₁₀ and PM _{2.5} during construction. With mitigation, as further detailed in Section 3.2 <i>Air Quality</i> , PM _{2.5} emissions would be within acceptable federal or state standards. As mitigated, PM ₁₀ emissions would not exceed federal standards, but they could still exceed state standards during the construction period and would be within acceptable federal and state standards during operations. Alt Route 1A: Project emission totals would exceed the MDAQMD thresholds of significance for PM ₁₀ and PM _{2.5} during construction. Emissions resulting from the construction and future operation of a route at this location would be within acceptable federal and state standards. Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: Project emission totals would exceed the MDAQMD thresholds of significance for PM ₁₀ and PM _{2.5} during construction. Emissions resulting from the construction and future operation of the substation at this location would be within acceptable federal and state standards. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: Same comment as above.	proposed Wind Development Projects	change to existing conditions.	
Visual Resources				
Wind turbines may have adverse effects to scenic resources	Wind turbines would be visible from key observation points in the vicinity. Mitigation measures, as further detailed in Section 3.3 <i>Visual Resources</i> , will be implemented to minimize impacts to visual resources. However, under CEQA, impacts remain significant. Alt Route 1A: Because of the low visibility and contrast of the road against the existing conditions, especially when compared to other Project features, impacts to visual resources from the access road are not anticipated. Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: The substation is not anticipated to impact visual resources due to a lower contrast viewer exposure and existing scenic quality. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: The substation at this location is anticipated to result in visual impacts, as it is more immediate than the turbines and would dominate foreground views from the highway. However, depending on the specific location selected for the substation, views may be obscured by existing and proposed transmission lines. Impacts would be reduced with implementation of mitigation measures, as further detailed in Section 3.3 <i>Visual Resources</i> .	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions. However, future proposed Wind Development Projects could potentially affect visual resources in the area.	impact. No change to existing	

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Biological Resource	es		
Location of wind turbines may affect species or habitats	Construction and operation of wind turbines may have impacts on species and habitats in the Project area. Mitigation measures and BLM BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.4 <i>Biological Resources</i> , would be implemented to minimize and/or avoid impacts to biological resources. Alt Route 1A: Access Route 1A crosses Mojave creosote bush scrub and Mojave mixed woody scrub communities. Disturbance is not considered adverse because these habitats are common throughout the region. Implementation of mitigation measures, as further detailed in Section 3.4 <i>Biological Resources</i> , would be implemented to further minimize and/or avoid impacts to biological resources. Alt Route 1B: Access Route 1B crosses four native plant communities (i.e., Mojave creosote bush scrub, Mojave mixed woody scrub, Joshua tree woodland, and partially stabilized desert sand fields). Implementation of mitigation measures, as further detailed in Section 3.4 <i>Biological Resources</i> , would be implemented to minimize and/or avoid impacts to biological resources. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: Both alternative substation 1A and 1B would result in the loss or conversion of native vegetation communities. substation construction and operation requires consultation with the CDFG and/or USFWS to ensure that this element of the Proposed Project would not jeopardize the continued existence of special status species. Furthermore, any proposed fill, obstruction, diversion, and so forth of drainages within the substation requires a California Fish and Game (CFG) Streambed Alteration Agreement, and Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) 401 Permit to assure that activities do not result in a net loss of natural drainage courses in the region. Implementation of mitigation measures, as further detailed in Section 3.4 <i>Biological Resources</i> , would be implemented to minimize and/or avoid impacts to biological resources. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: Environmental impacts are the same as the Substation Alternative 1A, see analysis above.	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions.	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.
Noise and Vibration	n		
Temporary noise levels may increase as a result of construction of wind turbines. Ambient noise levels may increase.	At every noise-sensitive receptor, and for every wind condition, the noise levels do not exceed the San Bernardino County 45 decibels A-weighted (dBA) equivalent sound level (Leq) threshold. Therefore, no CEQA significant noise impacts would occur as a result of operational noise generated by the Proposed Project. Construction of the Proposed Project would temporarily exceed 55 dBA noise levels. Mitigation measures, as further detailed in Section 3.5 <i>Noise and Vibration</i> , would be implemented to minimize impacts from construction. Alt Route 1A: The construction of Route 1A would generate an increase in noise levels. Implementation of mitigation measures would minimize impacts from construction. Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above.		No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.

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	Jasper Substation Alt 1A: No measurable impacts due to noise from substation 1A and associated power transmission lines are anticipated at this proposed location. Implementation of best management practices (BMPs) and standard mitigation measures would further reduce impacts. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: Same comment as above.			
Cultural Resources				
Construction of the wind energy generation facility may cause a substantial adverse change in significant historical and/or archeological resources.	No buildings or structures exist within the Proposed Project area, and none are known to occur within a one-mile radius. The visual impact analysis verifies that no other historic landmarks or features would be affected. The possibility remains that subsurface cultural resources could exist in the area of potential effect (APE). Implementation of identified mitigation measures and BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.6 <i>Cultural Resources</i> , would minimize impacts to cultural resources. Alt Route 1A: Two previously recorded sites and four newly recorded sites are located within the route's APE. Implementation of identified mitigation measures and BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.6 <i>Cultural Resources</i> , would minimize impacts to the recorded sites. Alt Route 1B: Six previously recorded sites and fourteen newly recoded sites are located within the route's APE. Implementation of identified mitigation measures and BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.6 <i>Cultural Resources</i> , would minimize impacts to the recorded sites. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: Two archaeological sites are located within the Substation 1A APE that could be affected during construction and/or operations. Implementation of identified mitigation measures and BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.6 <i>Cultural Resources</i> , would minimize impacts to resources that may exist and be discovered during Project construction. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: No archaeological sites and one isolate are located within the Substation 1B APE that could be affected during construction and/or operations. Implementation of identified mitigation measures and BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.6 <i>Cultural Resources</i> , would minimize impacts to resources that may exist and be discovered during Project construction.	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions. Future proposed Wind Development Projects could potentially have an adverse effect on unknown cultural resources.	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.	
Geology, Seismicit	y, and Mineral Resources			
The wind energy generation facility may be at risk for potential for seismically-related ground failure. Construction of the wind energy generation facility	The Proposed Project may be impacted by seismic activities. The Proposed Project may also impact soil erosion rates. Implementation of identified mitigation measures and BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.7 <i>Geology, Seismicity, and Soil Resources</i> , would minimize impacts during seismic events in the Project area. Alt Route 1A : Construction and utilization of the proposed access route could potentially result in soil erosion, landslide, or rockfall hazards and also impact geologic and mineral resources in the area. Implementation of identified mitigation measures, as further detailed in Section 3.7 <i>Geology, Seismicity, and Soil Resources</i> , would minimize impacts to such resources and address potential		No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.	

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may also result in substantial soil erosion and or be located on soil that is unstable.	hazards. Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: The potential impacts of earthquake-related hazards on construction and operations for Substation 1A are considered moderate. Implementation of identified mitigation measures, as further detailed in Section 3.7 Geology, Seismicity, and Soil Resources, would minimize impacts to such resources and address potential hazards. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: Same comment as above.		
Hydrology & Water	<u> </u>		
	Proposed Project structures could alter existing drainage patterns during construction and operation; however, implementation and compliance with regulations and BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.8 <i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i> , would reduce potential impacts to hydrology and water quality. Alt Route 1A: The proposed access road could alter existing drainage patterns, which, in turn, may pose impacts to water quality. However, with implementation of BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.8 <i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i> , water quality impacts would be minimized or avoided. Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1: The substation could alter existing drainage patterns, causing erosion and sediment impacts within the area surrounding the structure. However, with implementation of mitigation measures and BMPs, as further detailed in Section 3.8 <i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i> , erosion and sediment impacts would be minimized or avoided. Jasper Substation Alt 2: Same comment as above.	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions. However, future proposed Wind Development Projects could potentially exceed water quality standards.	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.
Land Use & Plannin	ng		
Construction of the wind energy generation facility may conflict with applicable land use plans.		existing conditions.	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.

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	discussed in Section 3.4 Biological Resources. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: Substation 1A is not located within an ACEC and is consistent with all applicable plans and land uses. Substation 1A would implement Southern California Edison (SCE) BMPs. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: Same comment as above.		
Recreation			
Construction of the wind energy generation facility may interfere with or diminish existing recreational opportunities in the area.	Implementation of this alternative is not expected to affect recreational use of the land during operation. Recreational access will be reduced during construction. Alt Route 1A: There are no long-term impacts to designated trails. Use of the proposed access road for construction and maintenance of the Proposed Project may affect designated trail use intermittently. Implementation of mitigation measures would further reduce temporary impacts. Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: Approximately ten acres of land would no longer be available for casual recreational use. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: Same comment as above.	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions.	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.
Socioeconomics			
The Proposed Project may affect the local economy.	Over the life of the Proposed Project, permanent jobs would be provided, as well as tax revenues to the local, regional, and state economy. Taxes paid annually would be beneficial to the local communities and would help sustain public services, providing residents with long-term benefits. Alt Route 1A & 1B: Same comment as above Jasper Substation Alt 1A & 1B: Same comment as above	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.
Environmental Just	ice	,	
The Proposed Project would not adversely impact low-income and/or minority populations.	The percentage of low-income and minority persons within the Project area do not exceed the County average. Therefore, environmental justice impacts related to Project development, including its proposed alternative access roads and Jasper substation locations, are not anticipated. Alt Route 1A & 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1A & 1B: Same comment as above.	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.
Transportation Sys	tems and Facilities		
The Proposed Project may increase existing traffic and/or exceed the level of service standards	The Proposed Project would slightly increase traffic on SR-247 above existing levels during construction and operation; however, Level of Service (LOS) standards for this roadway would be within acceptable levels. Construction impacts would be minimized with implementation of BMPs and mitigation measures included and discussed in Section 3.13 <i>Transportation Systems and Facilities</i> .	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions.	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.

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established by the County.	Alt Route 1A: This private access road is anticipated to be used for construction and Project maintenance purposes only. No substantial increase in use of adjacent public roadways is anticipated. With implementation of mitigation measures included and discussed in Section 3.13 <i>Transportation Systems and Facilities</i> , construction and operational impacts to adjacent public roadways would be minimized or avoided. Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: Minimal construction and operational impacts are anticipated to public roadways as a result of the proposed substation at this location. With implementation of mitigation measures included and discussed in Section 3.13 <i>Transportation Systems and Facilities</i> , any construction or operational impacts to public roadways would be minimized or avoided. Jasper Substation Alt 1B: Same comment as above.			
Utilities and Service				
the construction of new utilities and service systems in	A new septic system and internal electrical and communication lines are required for operation of the Proposed Project. Adequate capacity exists on the current transmission line for this Project. However, the transmission line does not have sufficient capacity for future generation projects. Implementation of mitigation measures and BMPs included and discussed in Section 3.14 <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i> would ensure that impacts to solid waste and utilities are minimized or avoided. Alt Route 1A: No utilities and services systems would be impacted. Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1A: Same comment as above.	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions.	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.	
Hazards and Hazard	dous Materials			
the public or environment through the transport or through accident conditions	All production, use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials associated with construction and operation of the Project would be in strict accordance with state and federal regulations. The Project area may be located within an MTR corridor, but no issues have been identified for structures fewer than 500 feet in height. Thus, no potential adverse impacts to navigable military airspace are expected. In addition, implementation of BLM BMPs included and discussed in Section 3.15 Hazards and Hazardous Materials would further reduce or avoid potential impacts. Alt Route 1A: Access Route 1A would also be consistent with BLM's emergency response plan for the Project area and would comply with the Project-specific public health and safety plan. Minimal hazardous materials would be used or stored on site for the construction of the route; impacts to public health and safety would be minimal or are not anticipated.	No mitigation required. No change to existing conditions.	No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.	

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	Alt Route 1B: Same comment as above. Jasper Substation Alt 1: Minimal hazardous materials would be used or stored on site for the construction of the substation. Substation 1A would also be consistent with BLM's emergency response plan for the Project area and would comply with the Project-specific public health and safety plan. Implementation of BLM BMPs included and discussed in Section 3.15 Hazards and Hazardous Materials would further reduce or avoid potential impacts. Jasper Substation Alt 2: Same comment as above.		
Paleontological Res	sources		
Directly or indirectly destroy unique paleontological resources or unique geologic features.	Construction and operation of the Proposed Project may impact paleontological resources in the Project site. Implementation of mitigation measures and BMPs		No mitigation required. No impact. No change to existing conditions.



